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SUBJECT: U.S. MESSAGES ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) The U.S. remains committed to comprehensive peace in the Middle East, including the two-state solution, and to an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict as soon as possible. To this end, Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell recently completed a 9-day trip to the Middle East and Europe to advance our efforts. Below are points that Posts can use in discussions with host governments on the U.S. approach to Middle East peace. End summary.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) From April 13 to April 22, Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell visited 11 Arab states, Israel, the West Bank, and Europe to advance the U.S. commitment to comprehensive peace in the Middle East, including the two-state solution. S/E Mitchell visited Rabat, Algiers, Tunis, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Cairo, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Muscat, Doha, Kuwait City, and Bahrain. He briefed the EU Political and Security Committee in Brussels on April 22.

¶3. (SBU) The focus of the trip was to create the context for negotiations toward an early resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The trip concentrated on three goals: 1) Begin a substantive dialogue with the new Israeli government, 2) Hold discussions with Israeli, Palestinian, and Arab leaders to encourage them to promptly take concrete steps to improve the environment for negotiations, and 3) Ensure full regional participation in our approach, in part by energizing the Arab Peace Initiative. Since his appointment in late January, Special Envoy Mitchell has met with 13 Arab and Muslim heads of state, in addition to his consistent engagement with Israel and European allies.

Talking Points

¶4. (SBU) Post can draw on the following points when engaging with host governments on Middle East peace:

--Comprehensive peace, including the two-state solution, is our objective, and we will pursue it vigorously in the coming months. The President is personally committed to these goals and continues to exert direct leadership on this issue.

--As the President stated during his recent visit to Ankara,

the parties have also committed to these goals in the Roadmap and at Annapolis.

--We are not interested in a lengthy, drawn-out process but in results. Our focus is not on the structure of negotiations but on ensuring that they yield these results as soon as possible.

--Our immediate objective is to work with our Israeli and Arab partners, and our allies throughout the international community, to create the conditions for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state and to reverse the pervasive skepticism and lack of trust in the region. This effort is also designed to prevent a new outbreak of violence that could significantly set-back our efforts and further destabilize the region.

--During his recent visit to Israel, Special Envoy met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for over two hours and discussed all of the relevant issues. The new Israeli government is undergoing a policy review, and the Prime Minister is likely to visit Washington in mid- to late May to discuss next steps with the President, the Secretary, and Special Envoy Mitchell. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will visit Washington shortly thereafter.

--These visits follow King Abdullah of Jordan's recent

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meeting with the President in Washington. They had a very productive discussion on many issues connected to Middle East peace, including settlements, Jerusalem, rocket fire from Gaza, and strengthening the Palestinian Authority and its institutions. We welcome King Abdullah's remarks following his meeting with the President in which he stated that America alone cannot achieve peace and so a group of countries, including Jordan, will do all it can to support the President.

--It is critical that Arab states consider actions that they can take, in the context of significant Israeli steps, to progress toward normalization with Israel.

--The U.S. approach to Middle East peace is linked to our efforts on Iran. Iran exploits regional conflicts--in the West Bank and Gaza, in Lebanon, and elsewhere--to extend its influence. Resolution of these conflicts will be a significant part of dealing with Iran, and the two-state solution is in the national interests of the United States, of Israel, and of our Arab allies. To this end, the Arab Peace Initiative will be integrated into our approach for comprehensive peace.

--While we move to create the conditions for meaningful negotiations, we must maintain support for those Palestinians who are committed to pursuing peace. It is imperative that President Abbas, Prime Minister Fayyad, and the Palestinian Authority are able to demonstrate that negotiations--rather than terrorism and armed resistance--are the means toward an independent and viable Palestinian state. Like any politician, President Abbas must be able to deliver benefits for his people, and it is in the interests of the U.S., Israel, and the international community to support him in this effort.

--Arab governments bear a special responsibility in this regard. Contrary to some assertions, the PA is improving the lives of ordinary people throughout the West Bank and Gaza with non-partisan, transparent programs. The World Bank and the IMF have endorsed the PA's budgetary and financial controls and account for its responsible use of budgetary assistance from donors, which totaled USD 1.7 billion in 2008 alone.

--While many Arab states believe that Palestinian

reconciliation is critical prior to Palestinian elections, reconciliation on the terms on which Hamas insists would fatally undermine President Abbas and the PA and alienate Israel. It will be impossible to conclude a peace agreement if one party enters the door just as another leaves the room.

--The Quartet principles--renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and respect for previous agreements and understandings--are the essential building blocks of a Palestinian state, and Hamas' continued rejection of these principles only delays the realization of Palestinians' legitimate aspirations to control their own destiny.

¶5. (U) For additional information, please contact Payton Knopf in NEA/IPA.

¶6. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
CLINTON